



FRACTL

Hey! That's us!

THE TELL-ALL GUIDE TO DIGITAL PR



Hip industry icons that mean
we're on target, communicative,
and get results!

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INTRODUCTION

It's good that you're here.

Why?

The probability of going from a pitch email to a media story isn't the greatest. Publishers are bombarded with pitches every day. Even if they read them all, it's impossible for them to publish enough stories to accommodate each pitch.

Assuming the pitches are all top-notch, and let's be real, they're not all going to be.

57% of top-tier publishers

receive between **50 and 500 pitches a week**, but the average top-tier writer only **writes 5 stories a week** or fewer.*

Yikes...

88% of respondents (all tiers) said they write stories from pitches a **few times a month or less**.

If a writer covers two pitches a month and gets 100 pitches a week, that means they cover, at most, **0.5% of all pitches**.

*Source: Fractl survey of 1,300 publishers

But don't panic!

These statistics inspired us to create this e-book – to gather our internal knowledge and tactics to make a resource that breaks down the steps to develop a **digital PR outreach strategy that actually works**.

We used our team's expertise and an exclusive publisher survey (an update to our 2014 survey that was published in the Harvard Business Review) to provide the information you'll find throughout this guide. We hope our insights will help you make actionable changes to your strategy!

Research Highlight



The promotability of your content has a lot to do with the success of your outreach efforts. Read ["The Roadmap for Creating Share-Worthy Content With Massive Distribution"](#) on Moz for more insight into how to enhance your creative efforts.

BONUS SECTION: The Promotional Viability Trifecta

Learn what kind of content you need to create to increase your chances of promotional success.



DECIDING WHOM TO PITCH

This is the most time-consuming and important part of the outreach process. If you don't put in the effort here, you're setting yourself up to fail.

But how do you put in the effort efficiently? This chapter will explain how to make the most of your time and provide resources on how to identify which writers and editors you should contact.



DEVELOPING AUDIENCE PERSONAS

An audience persona characterizes your or your client's ideal customer.

Creating these personas is an exercise in better understanding the people and companies you're trying to reach. In doing this, you'll be able to craft a more targeted and successful outreach strategy.

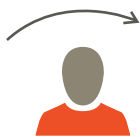
←
It's like the professional version of Facebook stalking your crush.

Once you have a better idea of who your target audience is, you'll be able to assess which publications they read and rely on (this is where you'll want your content to live). **This approach is especially important for any outreach strategies that incorporate brand-related or conversion-based goals** because of the need to connect with relevant audiences who are inherently interested in your brand and thus more likely to take action.

How do you create audience personas?

In general, **consider what your target audience wants, what they value, and what they fear most.** Specifically, make sure your personas include the following:

Don't forget
House –
Lannister,
Stark,
Hufflepuff
– what else
is there?



Demographic Information
(age, gender, income, education,
location, etc.)



Job Title/Role



Goals



Challenges

In order to start identifying these potential personas, there are several sources you can try.

1. Evaluate your current customers based on the above criteria to see which qualities your potential customers are most likely to have.
2. Analyze your brand's social community to determine the qualities of your average social audience.
3. Talk to your sales team about what they would consider to be the ideal client/customer.

After you've formed a better understanding of your audiences through personas, your **next step is to determine which websites they frequently visit** to get the news, to be entertained, and to learn more about their interests, etc.

We recommend using [BuzzSumo's influencer tool](#) to search for people who have similar jobs and roles as your audience personas. Once you identify influencers, you can look at their social media

feeds to determine which websites they read and which types of content they share.

Doing this research is a time investment, but it's definitely worth it to set up an outreach plan that has a higher chance of success at reaching the most relevant audiences.



TRACKING DOWN INFLUENCERS

If you've done outreach before, **you know that not all endorsements or shares are created equal**. Some people obviously have more connections than others, and even among those people with large social groups, certain people will have greater pull in different industries and subject matters because of established authority. ←

Kind of like the Regina George effect.

What does this mean for you?

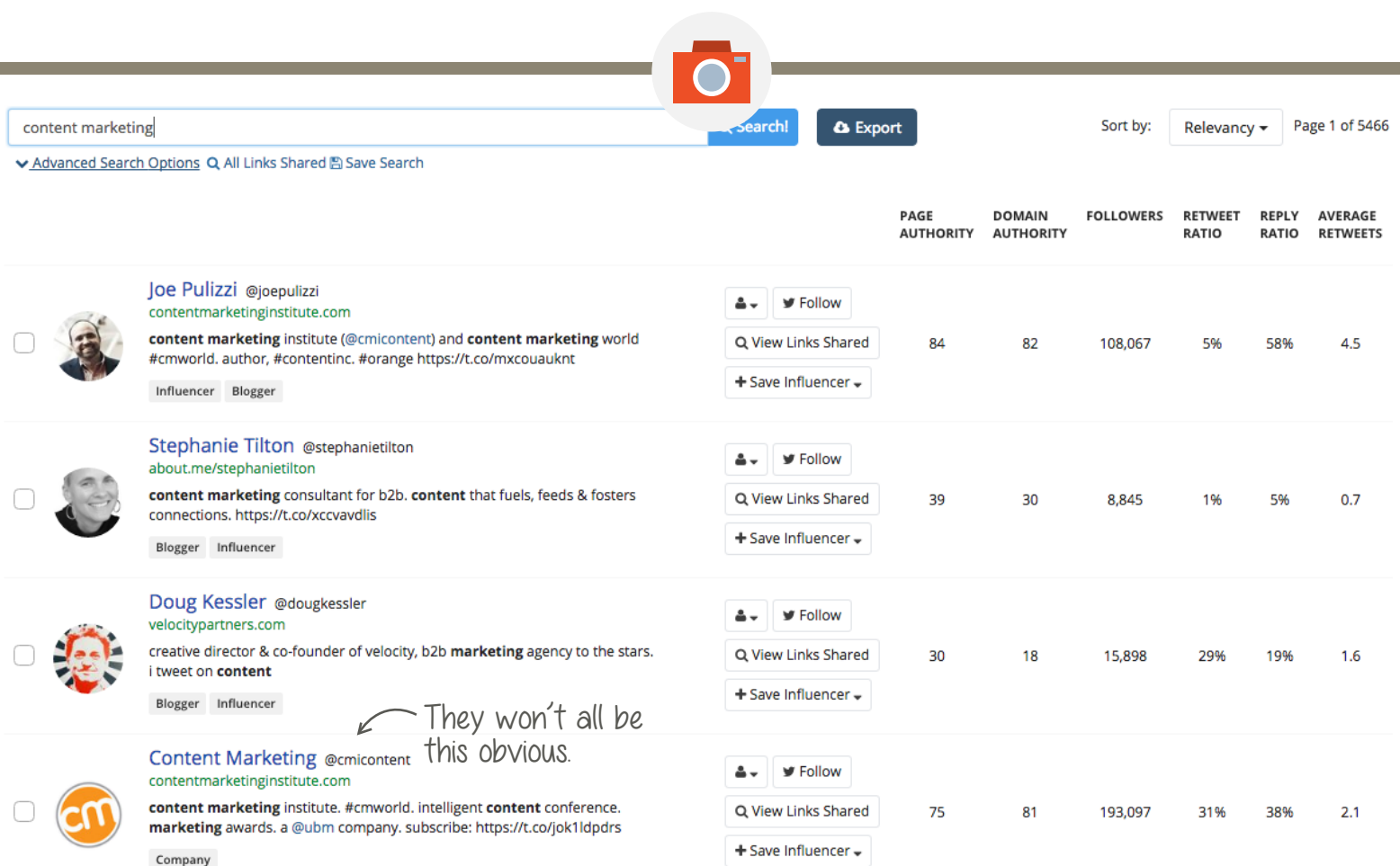
If you've got a million placements, but all are on secluded sites that are completely irrelevant to your client, **you're not getting a lot of value if you have goals outside of some SEO improvement**.

The key to having the most impactful placements in particular industries is to **target influencers**. When relevant influencers post or share content, their connections are more likely to find value in that content, and thus will be more likely to engage with your client's brand. If you want to go even deeper, **the structure of an influencer's network can matter more than the size of their network**, in terms of effectiveness at getting out a message. (You can read more about that [here](#).)

Here are two ways you can find quality influencers for your outreach.

1. Utilize keyword searches on social. This is the simplest route, but it's definitely one that shouldn't be overlooked. By searching industry-relevant keywords and hashtags, you'll see who has the **most followers and who posts the most about the topic**. Don't stop there, though; make sure to take a look at how many of their followers are also in the industry, and if their social posts are high quality and get a lot of engagement. For example, do they tweet a lot, but receive no retweets or replies? They might not have a lot of influence.

2. Use the "influencers" tab on BuzzSumo. This allows for a **more thorough search** of people on social who are posting content around a keyword by providing you with their Twitter handle, site they have listed (and that site's domain authority), their number of followers, and retweet ratio (which allows you to get a glimpse into the strength of their influence).



The screenshot shows the BuzzSumo search interface for the keyword "content marketing". At the top, there is a search bar with the text "content marketing", a search button, and an "Export" button. Below the search bar, there are links for "Advanced Search Options", "All Links Shared", and "Save Search". The results are sorted by "Relevancy" and are on "Page 1 of 5466".

		PAGE AUTHORITY	DOMAIN AUTHORITY	FOLLOWERS	RETWEET RATIO	REPLY RATIO	AVERAGE RETWEETS
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Joe Pulizzi @joepulizzi contentmarketinginstitute.com</p> <p>content marketing institute (@cmicontent) and content marketing world #cmworld. author, #contentinc. #orange https://t.co/mxcouauknt</p> <p>Influencer Blogger</p>	84	82	108,067	5%	58%	4.5
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Stephanie Tilton @stephanietilton about.me/stephanietilton</p> <p>content marketing consultant for b2b. content that fuels, feeds & fosters connections. https://t.co/xccvavdlis</p> <p>Blogger Influencer</p>	39	30	8,845	1%	5%	0.7
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Doug Kessler @dougkessler velocitypartners.com</p> <p>creative director & co-founder of velocity, b2b marketing agency to the stars. i tweet on content</p> <p>Blogger Influencer</p>	30	18	15,898	29%	19%	1.6
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Content Marketing @cmicontent contentmarketinginstitute.com</p> <p>content marketing institute. #cmworld. intelligent content conference. marketing awards. a @ubm company. subscribe: https://t.co/jok1ldpdrs</p> <p>Company</p>	75	81	193,097	31%	38%	2.1

They won't all be this obvious.

Once you have a solid grasp of who the top influencers are in the niche you're working in, **follow them to get a sense of the type of content they post to see if it's likely they'd post or share your content.** This leads us to our next point.

Not gonna go there ...

Research Highlight



Keep in mind that size doesn't always matter with influencer networks; what's more important is the structure of those networks. To learn more, read our research on the [Harvard Business Review](#), and apply our insights to your strategy.



RESEARCHING WRITERS AND PUBLICATIONS

When you're starting to vet your list of potential publishers, there are several things to consider before you even think about starting a pitch email. If you rush into reaching out, you can give the writer or editor the impression that you didn't do your research, and then no matter how good your content is, they're likely to pass over you.

When considering a publisher to pitch, make sure you check out these things first.

- This is certainly a good place to start.
- 1. Does the publisher even post third-party content?** You can usually figure it out by looking at their about page or a similar page and tracking down their editorial guidelines.
 - 2. Do they post content similar to the content you're hoping to pitch?** For example, if you're going to be pitching an infographic, but the site has never published one, you may want to skip it.

- 3. Do they post about the subject matter of your project?** If the site is really general or somehow tangentially related, scroll through their previous stories to see if they've ever covered something related to your content's topic. If it's too much of a stretch to be relevant to their audience, they'll probably pass.

EXCLUSIVE
INFO

80% of surveyed publishers

said they **commonly reject pitches** that are **irrelevant to their beat**.*

*Source: Fractl survey of 1,300 publishers

- 4. Is their audience engaged?** This might not always matter if you're just looking for high-quality links, but if you're looking for lead generation or brand awareness results, an engaged audience is crucial. Do people socially share the stories posted, and do they leave comments?
- 5. Do they post frequently?** If writer A posts three times a day and writer B posts once a month, you're more likely to get coverage from writer A because they have more spaces in their editorial calendar to fill.
- 6. Who are your options to pitch?** Research particular writer's and editor's works for a match. Also, keep this in mind: The position of the person you're pitching can affect the response and placement rate. Editors hold more rank than reporters, but staff writers usually have more pull (and assignments) than contributors when pitching ideas to their team or editor.

A/S/L
doesn't
count.
(Sorry
for the
'90s
joke.)

Checking these criteria is a must before finalizing your pitch list. But there's one more thing you have to consider before moving forward.



DECIDING BETWEEN EXCLUSIVE VS. SYNDICATION

At Fractl, our pitch strategy involves pitching the exclusive publication and then syndicating the content after the exclusive is live.

What exactly does that mean?

Well, when we pitch the **exclusive** to publishers, **we're promising them that they'll be the first to publish our data**, which adds value to their story. An article is more newsworthy if it contains fresh information, which is why this promise is appealing to writers and why we only promise it to the publications we think are the best fit for the content. Once the exclusive placement is live, then we start pitching the content to other publishers without promising first coverage.

So how do you decide who should be offered the exclusive and who should be saved for syndication?

Engagement level is key.

Hopefully, you've already examined a publisher's engagement levels when first assessing them. But this analysis plays an even more important role when deciding if a site is a good fit for an exclusive offer.

Make sure to dive deeper. Don't just assess the engagement levels of the publication – **assess how many shares that particular writer gets on his or her stories** (because that can be very different from the publication's overall average). You can use [BuzzSumo](#) to quickly evaluate a particular writer's level of engagement.

The best-case scenario is that when an exclusive placement goes live, **the site has enough engagement that natural syndication occurs**, meaning other outlets pick up the story and people share it on their social networks. If sites and writers don't have this built-in engagement, you're potentially missing out on additional quality placements that would have occurred organically.

In a similar vein, you need to make sure that potential exclusive publications post multiple times a week that receive this level of engagement.

If a publisher posts infrequently,
you have **less of a chance of securing an exclusive story on their site**, and they're better **saved for a high-quality** syndication placement.

Another consideration is that generally only top-tier publishers (domain authority of 80+) place importance on exclusives, **so focus on these high-tier sites and reach out to the lower-tier sites for syndication.**

Research Highlight



If social shares are an important metric for you, check out our research, published on [Buffer](#), to learn how to build an outreach strategy that will have a higher chance of dominating social channels.

BONUS SECTION: Writer/Editor Red Flags

Find out what signs mean you shouldn't pitch to a specific person or publication.

[CLICK HERE](#)

WHEN TO PITCH

Once you know exactly who you'll be pitching, it's time to consider when to pitch and how long the pitching period should last. If you're working for a client, it's important to communicate this plan to them so they understand your process and know what to expect.



PLANNING A PITCH TIMELINE

At Fractl, for a standard promotional run, **we usually allocate about 4 to 6 weeks**, broken down like this:

Exclusive Pitching: 1–2 weeks
Syndication Pitching: 3–4 weeks

It's important to take time during the exclusive stage to get the best placement, because the more engagement your placement gets, **the more natural syndication you'll get**, making your job easier.

However, no matter how much natural syndication you get, **it's important to still do syndication pitching of your own**, because **that personal touch can go a long way with publishers**.

↩ It's 3.489, actually.

There is no magical number of pitches you absolutely need to send per day, but obviously, the more you can send, the better. It mostly depends on the size of your promotions team. Only have one person on the job? Don't be surprised if he or she can only send out one or two pitches a day.

Why?

TO REACH THE QUALITY NECESSARY TO CRAFT A SUCCESSFUL PITCH, IT TAKES TIME.

Keep this in mind when building out your resources and deciding on a target volume of pitch emails per week.



TIMING YOUR PITCH EMAILS EFFECTIVELY

The probability of your email being opened and read changes depending on when you send it. This is particularly true when your recipients are busy and often have overflowing inboxes.

How do you improve your chances of getting your pitch seen?

1. Send pitches in the morning. It's a common practice for people to get into the office in the morning and check their emails, and our survey results emphasize that morning is the best route as well.

EXCLUSIVE
INFO


41% of respondents said

they preferred to **receive** pitches either **overnight or in the morning.**

Make sure your email is in that early batch to improve the chances of it getting read.

Another important consideration: If you're pitching publications based in other countries, schedule out pitch emails for their morning time. (For example, 4 a.m. EST for publications in the U.K.)

2. Your “pitch week” should start at noon on Monday and end at noon on Friday. Sending an email too early or too late in the week is asking to be overlooked, as people are either playing email catch-up or scrambling to get emails out before the weekend.

 **3. Never pitch on holidays.** In fact, don't even pitch the day before or the day after a major holiday. Think about how you deal with emails during these stressful times – you probably skim through them, just trying to get things answered and done. Don't let your pitch be read when the recipient is in that sort of mindset!

We are never ever, ever replying to sender!

Once you know when you'll be sending the pitches, it's time to perfect the pitch itself.

BONUS SECTION: Downloadable Pitch Freeze Calendar

Print it out and keep it handy to remember when to hold off on pitching due to a likelihood of it getting lost in the publisher's inbox.



MASTERING THE PITCH EMAIL

Targeting the right writers and publications is crucial, but if you don't send them an engaging pitch with a gripping subject line, it is all for nothing. This chapter will provide advice on all the ways to make your pitch primed for a response.

SUBJECT LINE

The subject line might be even more important than the pitch.

Why?

It determines whether the writers open the email, and that's the biggest hurdle of all. These few words of text serve as your call to action and your first impression, so invest time in crafting one that will do your pitch and content justice.

There are three main types of effective subject lines, and you should write a few of each for your content to get a good mix. Then you should pitch them accordingly, based on what you think each publisher would respond to more. (For example, if a particular writer publishes a lot of data-driven content, make sure your subject line has a statistic in it.)

Here are the three kinds of subject lines.

1. Statistic-based: Calls out an engaging statistic from the data. These are one of the most successful types of subject lines.

→ **Example:** 76% of India's STD-Related Questions on Yahoo Are Based on AIDS & HIV

2. Content title: Using the content's title is the most straightforward approach, but only attempt it if you can think of a title that's inherently interesting.

→ Example: 19,558 Yahoo Questions Relate to STDs [Data Visualization]

3. Information gap: Based on the "information gap theory of curiosity," this type is effective because of the innate human behavior that's triggered when people discover a gap between what they know and what they want to know, prompting them to take action (aka, open your email).

→ Example: Which Countries Ask the Most STD-Related Questions on Yahoo Answers?

4. Personalized: This type is entirely based on personal information you discovered about the writer via their digital footprint, and it helps you to stand out. Only use this for high-tier publications that may overlook other types of headlines.

Headline Examples

OK

Here's What It Takes to Work off a Night of Drinking [Exclusive]



Better

I need to do 3 hours of laundry to burn off two beers [Web App]

How much laundry do you have to do to burn off happy hour? [Web App]

When drafting all of these types of subject lines, **there are best practices you should always incorporate**. These characteristics are what will catch the writer's attention amid the sea of emails in his or her inbox.

SUBJECT LINE CHECKLIST

✓ **Is it between 45–65 characters, and preferably no more than 10 words?** If the subject line is too long, it'll be cut off anyway. You need to be effective at communicating a small number of words. Test out which are most engaging by emailing yourself with the different headline options and seeing which grab your attention most.

✓ **Does it include an interesting statistic from your content?** Saying something like “Pokémon Go Study” as your subject line won't be enough, but if you include an interesting statistic or finding from your research, you're in a much better position to engage a writer. For example, “48% say they'd commit light arson for a Snorlax.”

We made that up, but we wouldn't be surprised.

✓ **Are you naming the type of content?** This is particularly relevant if the content is unique or specialized. For example, including words and phrases like “Data Visualization,” “Study,” or “Original Maps” will not only help differentiate your content but will also inform the recipient about what to expect. One content type to not mention, however, is “Infographic” – it's become overused, and some publishers will delete an email immediately if they see “Infographic” in the subject line.

✓ **Are you incorporating the local angle if it exists?** If your content has a geographical component, always take the opportunity to mention the localized findings to the recipient. Information becomes significantly more newsworthy if it's tailored to the publisher's area rather than just general information.

While these are all good practices, some writers or editors in certain industries have particular preferences when it comes to subject-line format. Based on our survey results, we discovered what subject-line types many writers in each of these niches prefer.*

INDUSTRY	Entertainment/ Travel	Food/Lifestyle	Business/ Finance	Business/ Education/ Finance/Health
TITLE TYPE	Content Title	Personalized	Information Gap	Data-Driven
EXAMPLE	Which dinosaur was most common in your state? [MAP]	Love the T-Rex? We're partial to the Piatnitzkysaurus.	What a dinosaur would be worth today?	Survey finds 89% of dinosaurs have taken a survey.

*Source: Fractl survey of 1,300 publishers

Consider these preferences when pitching in certain niches to increase the odds of nabbing writers' and editors' attention.

Before we move on to the actual pitch, here's a **pro tip**.

When one editor gives you an inside recommendation to reach out to another editor at that publication, call that out in your subject line using something like:

Hi Kiki, Emma Gray Fwd. Me to You RE: Celebrity Selfie Phenomenon [Study]
Sarah Green Fwd. Me to You While She's on Vacation – RE: [Exclusive Study]

OK, now you're bound to have a killer subject line. So here's how to nail the pitch, too.

INTRODUCTION

You got them to open the email with a killer subject line, but the work doesn't stop there. Once they're reading the email itself, you have to immediately establish that you **(a)** are a human being who can form a genuine connection and **(b)** have a great reason for reaching out to them.

The introduction is a great place for **(a)** if you lead off with something general or generic, they'll know you didn't do your research, **and it's game over**. But if you start by showing you know something about the writer by saying something personalized, **you're way ahead of the curve**.

Click for
a wave
of sweet
gamer
nostalgia.

To discover more about the writer in order to write a strong introduction in your pitch, try the following:

- ✓ See if they have a bio page on their publication's website (or else check out their Twitter bio or personal website). If they do, check to see if you have anything in common personally that you can open with.
- ✓ Read what they've written in the past, and if applicable, start your email with thought-provoking feedback about one of their articles or blog posts (especially if it relates to what you're trying to pitch)!

Once you've finalized the intro, it's time to write a strong body.

BODY

Yet! First of all, look in the mirror and say, “I’m not George R.R. Martin. I’m not George R.R. Martin.” Once you remember that you are not a long-winded writer who writes high-fantasy novels, then you’re ready to write a

**concise email between 100–200 words
(including the introduction and conclusion)!**

Half of our survey respondents said they preferred this length in pitch emails, so only say what needs to be said.

Here’s what needs to be in the body.

✓ The most compelling statistics/facts from the content so the writer knows why the content is interesting.

TIP: The best way to do this is by continuing to use curiosity gaps; use the most surprising information to keep the writer curious.

✓ Mentions of why the content is newsworthy, like how the data was just collected or how our approach is timely because of a recent, relevant event.

✓ A simple, straightforward indication of why the content is relevant to the writer’s typical topics of interest.

✓ Links to the final content, where the project is easy to understand and navigate.

Finally, when drafting the body, remember that the best way to spice up a pitch is to **take advantage of the emotional elements of the content.**

Which are hopefully present.

EXCLUSIVE
INFO

In our survey, **50% of publishers** said they commonly **turn down pitches** that are just plain **boring**.*

To identify those elements, take a look at the content like you're an everyday reader. What strikes you? What surprises you? What catches your attention most?

Highlight these aspects in your pitch and **tell a story**. If you can accomplish this, you have a much better chance of securing the writer's or editor's interest.

CLOSING

In the body, you talked about the content and why it's a good fit. In the conclusion, make sure to reinforce how the content will benefit the publisher and his or her readers.

EXCLUSIVE
INFO

56% of surveyed publishers said they commonly **reject pitches** for being too **self-promotional**.*

That means you have to emphasize the mutually beneficial relationship and explain why you think their audience will enjoy the content and find it valuable.

*Source: Fractl survey of 1,300 publishers

Then, and this is particularly important for top-tier publishers, **ask them for their feedback**. This signals that you really value their opinion and respect them. Plus, if they do end up giving feedback, it can potentially help you revamp the content or decide who might be a better fit to pitch!

Finally, sign off with a polite salutation, like “best” or “cheers.” After all of your hard work, once you send it off, it’s time to wait to see if they respond.

Research Highlight



We teamed up with BuzzStream and surveyed 500 top-tier publishers to see what their advice was to improve pitches. Read our findings and their advice on [ProBlogger](#).

EXCLUSIVE INFO

! BEFORE YOU HIT SEND !

Make sure to **reread everything** and check for typos, spelling errors, and grammar mistakes.

42% of our survey respondents

said they would **flag a pitch as spam if they found a spelling error**.

Don't let "their" and "there" keep you from getting your pitch read!

Want to see how it all works together? Check out this actual pitch used by the Fractl team, which ended up succeeding in getting coverage on SFist.

To

Subject

Hey Jack,

I'm from Miami where we don't really use trains, but I can't imagine what traffic looked like last week in the Bay Area when 80 BART cars were pulled from service. I wonder if people were courteous enough to take the survival guide seriously.

With 132 million people using the BART annually, have you ever thought about its cleanliness? My team at Travelmath wanted to find out more about the germs we come in contact with while using public transportation. We looked at five major U.S. cities and found:

- A dog's chew toy is almost 40x dirtier than a BART car
- BART has **50% fewer riders** than the D.C. Metro, but is **15x dirtier**
- 85% of BART's bacteria is associated with causing skin infections

To look at the full project [click here](#).

With San Francisco being one of the more overcrowded cities in U.S. I'm sure your readers would be interested in knowing just how clean the BART is and how it compares to American public transit systems. Oh, and don't forget to mention hand sanitizer.

Will you feature this original study on SFist?

Cheers,

Daniel

Send



BONUS SECTION: Before You Pitch Checklist

Here's a handy list of things to check to ensure your pitch is perfect before clicking "send."



WHAT TO DO WHEN THEY REPLY

If you get a positive response from a publisher, that's a great sign that your pitch was on target and that your content is interesting and well-positioned. But the work isn't over yet! Depending on their level of interest, **you have to keep them intrigued and persuade them to attribute appropriately.**



KEEPING THEM HOOKED

They said they're interested! Hooray! Sound the alarms! Launch the cannons! Bang the gongs! ^{Other noisy actions, etc.}

Rather than just handing over all of the content and calling it a day, you can build a lot of goodwill if **you make a suggestion as to what their audience might be particularly interested in**, similarly to how you pitched them.

If your creative team happens to have extra data that wasn't in the initial project that you think the writer would be interested in, **providing that is going the extra mile and won't go unnoticed.**

Any way you show that you're truly interested in their readers will make a great impression. Another way to build goodwill is to offer to help out in any way possible, like if they need additional context, quotes, graphics, etc. This is a nice way of adding value even if you don't have extra data on hand.



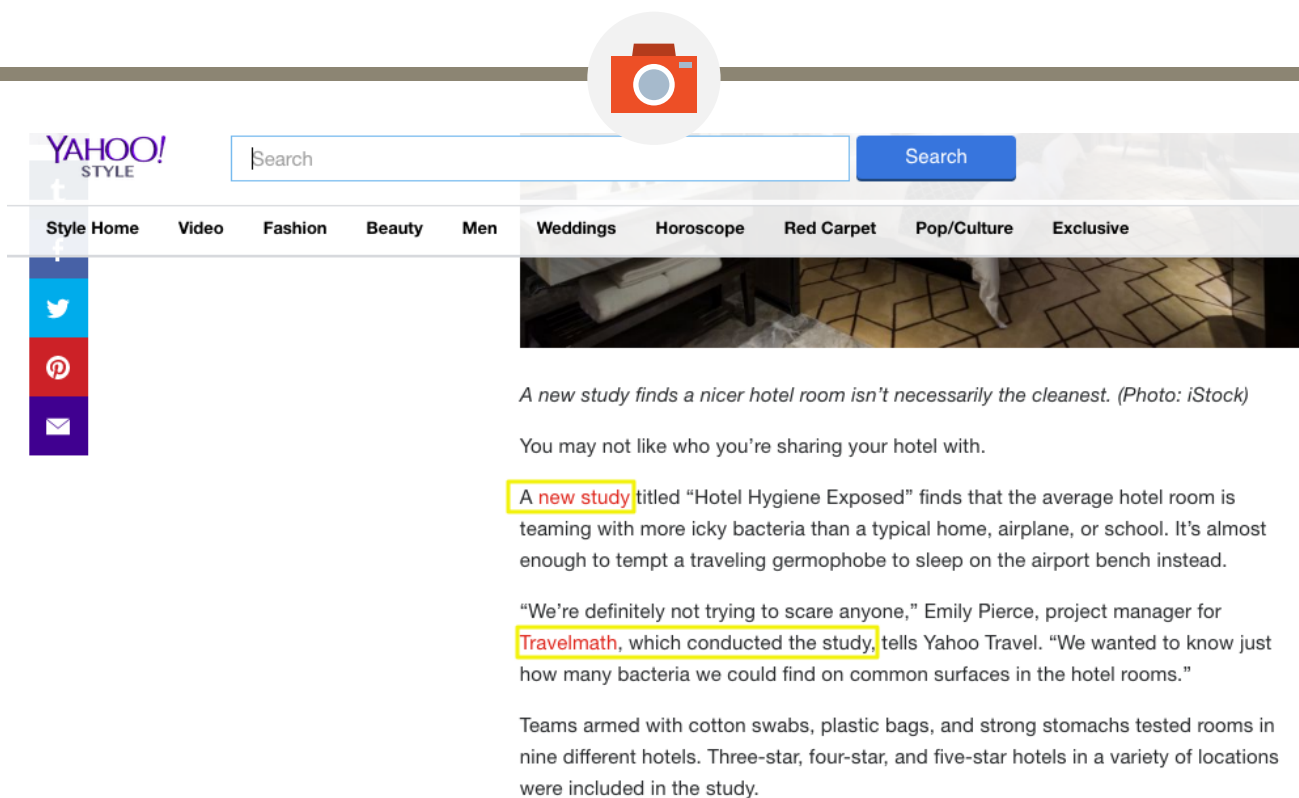
ENCOURAGING A BRAND MENTION

Depending on your goals, this part may have more or less importance to you. But at the very least, it's good to get credit where it's due.

So how do you tactfully ask publishers to include a brand mention or link?

Simply explain who should receive attribution for the data/content. Most writers know the drill and understand that they can't just take the information without attributing it (though it has been known to happen on occasion). So just in case, tell them the source of the information (and hyperlink in the email so that it's clear).

For example, if you have a client who would prefer for their homepage URL to get the link, say that [somecompany.com](#) should get the credit for the project. Here's an example of how this looks once the article is published.



The screenshot shows a portion of a Yahoo! Style article. At the top, there is a search bar with the text "Search" and a blue "Search" button. Below the search bar is a navigation menu with links for "Style Home", "Video", "Fashion", "Beauty", "Men", "Weddings", "Horoscope", "Red Carpet", "Pop/Culture", and "Exclusive". On the left side, there are social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Email. The main content area features a photograph of a hotel room with a bed and a patterned rug. Below the photo is a caption: "A new study finds a nicer hotel room isn't necessarily the cleanest. (Photo: iStock)". The text of the article begins with "You may not like who you're sharing your hotel with." followed by a paragraph: "A new study titled 'Hotel Hygiene Exposed' finds that the average hotel room is teeming with more icky bacteria than a typical home, airplane, or school. It's almost enough to tempt a traveling germophobe to sleep on the airport bench instead." Another paragraph follows: "'We're definitely not trying to scare anyone,' Emily Pierce, project manager for Travelmath, which conducted the study, tells Yahoo Travel. 'We wanted to know just how many bacteria we could find on common surfaces in the hotel rooms.'" The final paragraph states: "Teams armed with cotton swabs, plastic bags, and strong stomachs tested rooms in nine different hotels. Three-star, four-star, and five-star hotels in a variety of locations were included in the study."

Not literally this, obviously ... unless your company is called BRAND MENTION/LINK, in which case, I like your straight-shooting style.

If they leave the link out and the story goes live, you can follow up and ask something like, "Can you please include a [BRAND MENTION/LINK] to the landing page? That way your readers can get more information if they're interested." Just make sure to keep the email positive; for example, start by saying something along the lines of how you're happy they enjoyed the content.



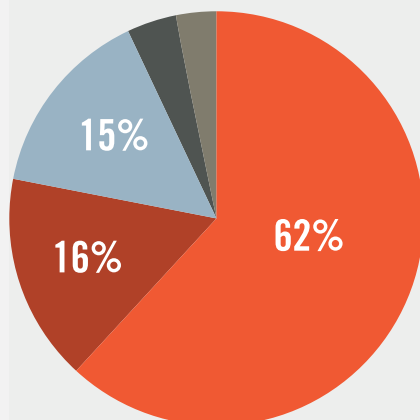
BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP

Most publishers want to maintain a relationship with people who pitch them relevant content. And when you think about it, this makes sense. Once you've sent them great content they were able to craft into a valuable story for their audience, they're more likely to trust you and your content, and they benefit from receiving your data and insights to create more stories.

But how can you foster a continued relationship?

EXCLUSIVE
INFO

How Publishers Prefer You Maintain A Relationship With Them *



- Email
- LinkedIn
- Twitter
- Other
- I would rather not develop

these relationships.

If I had a nickel every
time I heard that ...

*Source: Fractl survey of 1,300 publishers

Most publishers prefer email correspondence, so oftentimes, it's best to pursue this route, especially if they're not active on social media. This allows you to naturally continue the conversation, but there's one important thing to keep in mind:

Don't always send them content related to your work or your client's work.

If you keep things "all business," you're less likely to form a lasting rapport. Remember that behind the text is a human being, **so try to connect on a personal level.** You can:

- ✓ **Provide a bit of information about yourself.** What did you do last weekend? What exciting plans do you have coming up? Opening up about your life could lead to conversations that help you find things in common.
- ✓ **Talk about something the writer or editor recently published.** Take a topic they're obviously interested in and comment on it. This is a discussion they're much more likely to be engaged by.

If you do decide to reach out on social, try the following:



Retweet/Like
/Favorite
their content.



Reply when you
have something
to add.



Ask them questions or
share content with them
you think they'd enjoy.

When you genuinely like a person you have a working relationship with, **you're each likely to get more out of the connection.**

It never stops hurting.



MANAGING REJECTION EMAILS

The strategy here will differ based on what exactly the negative reply entailed. Here are some best practices based on the nature of the response.

- ☑ **We don't publish content like this.** If they're referring to the style of content, like infographics, then make a note in your records not to pitch that publication that type of content anymore. If they mean the topic, make a similar note, and try to figure out why the initial outreach research revealed something different. And if you don't know what they're referring to, you can kindly ask in a follow-up and explain you want to better understand what they're looking for so you can provide more value in the future.
- ☑ **We're not accepting content at this time.** Sometimes editorial calendars are simply full, and it's not necessarily a reflection on your content. However, it is worth researching why a publication's calendar might be full – are there so many relevant current events going on that anything not super newsworthy will be passed over? This insight can help inform your future ideation within this industry.
- ☑ **We'll pass, but thanks for sending along!** Sometimes publishers won't be forthcoming about why they don't want the content. This can be a great opportunity to follow-up to see if they have any insight as to why they're not interested, and that feedback can help you create better content in the future or even tweak the content now so that you have a better chance of getting it published elsewhere.

No matter what the reason, **don't take it personally**; each rejection is an opportunity to learn about how to improve your content and how to better understand potential publishers.

BONUS SECTION: Interviewing Best Practices

Learn tips for having productive media interviews over the phone and through email.



WHAT TO DO WHEN THEY DON'T REPLY

It sucks to not get a response; I think we can all agree on that.

But in the world of pitching, it's a guarantee that you'll experience virtual tumbleweed. The good news is that there's a strategy for when this happens. *And no, it's not replying "plz respond."*



WHEN TO FOLLOW UP

Timing is crucial. If you're too soon to follow up, you're a bother. If you're too late, you're no longer relevant. But in that sweet spot, you're providing a helpful reminder, and that's what you're aiming for.



Our recommendation is waiting at least **two business days** before sending a follow-up email.

Silence could mean that the person is just not interested, or it could mean the person is drowning in a sea of subject lines and hasn't broken the surface yet. Give them some time to catch up, and then follow up.



CRAFTING THE PERFECT FOLLOW-UP

Once those two days have passed and you've heard nada from the writer or editor, you can reach out. But don't just say, "Hey, following up on this, thanks!" Even in your follow-up, you need to provide value.

Here are two ways you can do this.

Like it's Steve following up about whether I'll do him a solid and watch his two yorkies while he goes to Burning Man. I will not watch your yorkies, Steve. I WILL NOT.



Call out a new or different statistic from your content (as long as it's still relevant to the writer's audience and their interests).



Point out connections between your content and a trending news topic that's recently hit the media and makes your project even more timely.

It's also important to not get too overeager. According to our survey, 63% of publishers said one follow-up is appropriate, and 18% said two was appropriate. So never, never send more than two follow-ups if you're not getting replies.

Never!



PRODDING THE GHOSTS

Sometimes this can be the most heartbreaking – when you think you’ve secured interest, but the writer ghosts you.

↳ But after you’ve picked up a few pints of Half Baked from the store.

Before you break out the Ben & Jerry’s, **we encourage you to follow up once more**. In that email, include the following:

- Expression of happiness that they’re interested
- Follow up about whether they want to publish the exclusive
- If it’s an exclusive, an explanation that you only have X more days to hold the exclusive for each publisher so that the data doesn’t go stale
- If it’s a syndicated placement, a polite question about whether they have everything they need for the story (as a gentle nudge to publish)

This adds a bit of urgency while not sounding too assertive. If they don’t respond to that email, assume they’re no longer interested and move on to the next best outlet.

CONCLUSION

We've gone pretty in-depth about how to tackle every step of the promotions process, but we have one more piece of information that works as a proper summary. It's called the **Blogger Outreach Equation**.

Based on the sales principle AIDAS, the adapted principle helps you remember the key elements of content promotion.

Not the shoe brand (but I bet you read it with the extra "D").

AIDAS



BLOGGER OUTREACH EQUATION





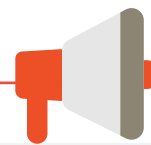
Awareness refers to making connections with writers via email and Twitter. It's only when a writer or editor is aware of who you are and what value you can provide that you'll be able to start establishing a connection.



Interest refers to your content as well as your pitch. Is your content simple, emotional, accurate, new, and relevant? Not only does the content need to have these qualities, but you need to highlight these qualities in your outreach emails.



Desire refers to writers or editors hopefully wanting the content. Make sure you're reaching out to publications that would be a good fit for your project – do they usually post content like this? Does your project offer something fresh they can show their readers? Are you calling out the different ways this content would be beneficial to the publication's audience?



Action refers to persuading publishers your content is worth posting. This stage overlaps with desire and incorporates everything mentioned in the "Improving Your Pitch" section of this guide. Why can't the publisher pass up on this project?

It's been fun, y'all. Good luck out there!



Need help mastering the promotions process? [We can help.](#)